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### Gardner-Webb University Hosts National Conference for Baptist Professors of Religion

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# Gardner-Webb University Hosts National Conference for Baptist Professors of Religion

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Office of University Communications

May 31, 2011

*Gardner-Webb University recently played host to nearly a hundred Baptist professors and graduate students in religion for the annual meeting of the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion (NABPR). This was the University's first time hosting the annual meeting.*

BOILING SPRINGS, N.C. – According to its website, the NABPR is a community of teaching scholars who meet to sharpen teaching skills and encourage the continuation of meaningful scholarship in the fields of religious studies. While most members teach or study at Baptist-affiliated schools, colleges, and seminaries, many members come from a wide range of church-related and state-supported schools in the United States, Canada, and abroad.

According to Dr. Ron Williams, president of NABPR and professor of religious studies at Gardner-Webb, the annual meeting offers networking and career development opportunities for current professors and graduate students entering the field. “Gardner-Webb’s involvement with NABPR is absolutely essential,” said Williams, “because it introduces us to students from universities around the country, students who may become future job candidates. It is also crucial for those students to meet one another and build their network.” The conference actually opened with a banquet for doctoral students, designed intentionally for networking purposes.

The NABPR members then enjoyed three days of compelling conversation at Gardner-Webb, including special presentations by Dr. Bill J. Leonard, professor of church history at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, and by Dr. Stephen Chapman, professor of Old Testament at Duke Divinity School. There was also a special Festschrift dedication in honor of the late Dr. Ed Gaustad, longtime NABPR member and influential Baptist historian.

The most important parts of the conference, though, were the breakout sessions in which dozens of professors and graduate students from universities around the country presented new research. In fact, twelve of the presenters were either current or previous Gardner-Webb students or faculty members, and four were recent graduates of the undergraduate religious studies program.

“It makes us very proud and very satisfied to see our recent graduates step up in such high pressure situations and perform so well. It helps them know they have the capability to perform at this level, and it helps us know that we have prepared them well,” said Williams.

“And of course, it’s wonderful to see former students who are now doctoral students, and some even professors, at other institutions,” he added. “We are very proud of what they have accomplished.”